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eleventh chapter, which describes the life and art of the Venetian people. His description of Venetian architecture and painting is something unique, and entitles him to the position of an art-critic of the very first order.

Some of the following chapters too are of a high character, particularly the biography of Sarpi. Mr. Thayer concludes that Venice died from old age (pp. 316, 317); that like a species born in one geologic period, it survived into another to which it was not adapted. In one sense this is probably true. Doubtless a nation, like a man, is mortal, but there is no normal number of years for its existence, like the three-score and ten of human life. The Vandal empire in Africa became decrepit in a century while Rome required many centuries to attain even its growth. In another place Mr. Thayer had said very admirably of the creation of Venice (p. 28) "that it put forth the attributes of permanence, which implies not the changelessness of stagnation but adaptability". It is a corollary to this that old age is a condition where the rigidity of ancient custom forbids adaptation to new conditions, so we would like to go a little beyond his diagnosis and find out what it was in Venice that led to this rigidity. The problem is too complicated to be decided by a single guess, but it can safely be said that the oligarchy in failing to prescribe any adequate means for eliminating its own unworthy constituents and for constantly admitting to their places the best and most energetic elements of the lower orders of citizens, failed to provide for an infusion of that fresh blood, which was necessary to keep the state abreast of new conditions. This was at least one cause of the decline. An oligarchy which is itself well-nigh immutable cannot meet the changing requirements of new times.

The first chapters of this history leave much to be desired but the final portion of the book is, on the whole, just, admirable and inspiring.

Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions. By H. MUNRO CHADWICK.
(Cambridge: University Press. 1905. Pp. xiv, 422.)

IN his preface to these *Studies* the author notes the fact that philologists usually have an eye for their own field of work only. To Mr. Chadwick, however, this rule does not seem to apply. Though primarily a linguist, he brings to his work, in addition to a thorough knowledge of the Saxon speech, an evident enthusiasm for historic research. His *Studies* is a series of essays dealing with some of the more important problems of institutional history. The first half of the work is devoted to the Old English social system and is principally a discussion of wergelds and kindred topics. This is prefaced by a study of the Anglo-Saxon monetary system in which the author reaches conclusions widely differing from those recently put forth by Mr. Seeböhm. The second part is a study of the administrative system, and deals with local government, the national council, the origin of nobility and related matters.

Mr. Chadwick is a firm believer in the absolute authority of the Anglo-Saxon king. The witan formed a council merely, whose advice

the king might disregard at pleasure. Scattered all over the kingdoms were the king's estates, each controlled by a reeve who also exercised authority over the adjacent territory. This was the earliest form of local rule. There existed in those early days a reckoning in hundreds of hides, but these did not become administrative units before the tenth century.

To avoid having to share his authority with his relatives (the kingship may have been the property of the whole royal family), the king might assign them certain parts of the realm to administer. Such was the origin of the shire, at least in Wessex. In Alfred's day each shire had its own earl; but in the tenth century, when the large earldoms were being formed, the shire system declined and the borough (a Danish institution perhaps) took its place. But the burghal system proving burdensome, the shire was revived and a new official, the shire-reeve, was placed in control.

It will be readily seen from what has been cited that, if Mr. Chadwick's views are accepted, large sections of Old English constitutional history will have to be rewritten. There can be no doubt that on many points the author's conclusions are correct. To cite an instance, his argument against the old view of a dual shire-government by sheriff and ealdorman seems quite convincing. He very properly emphasizes the fact that periods and places have had their own peculiar forms of development and must be studied accordingly. He also appreciates the difficulties of terminology and the fact that words are not always bound to one meaning. At times, however, his interpretation of terms seems decidedly forced. It requires more than a plausible conjecture or a faint analogy to convince the reader that *land-agende*, 'land-owning', means possessing five hides, that the Danish *here*, 'host', of the tenth century was a political as well as a military organization, or that *geceosan to cyninge*, 'to choose for king', means merely to swear allegiance to a king.

In his use of documents, especially of doubtful charters, the author is hardly as cautious as we should expect such a painstaking student to be. Too many of his conclusions are based on very little or very questionable evidence; some are probabilities merely. He draws many interesting facts from the burghal, county and tribal hidages; but his belief that the shire at one time was reckoned at twelve thousand hides is scarcely well founded. His suggestion that the high-reeve may have presided over the borough is at best a probability based on the supposition that the borough at one time displaced the shire. In his opinion that the hundred had a Danish origin, he believes he has Steenstrup's support; such, however, is not the case.

But Mr. Chadwick's work is a remarkably suggestive study: new interpretations are proposed and the possibilities of certain neglected materials are clearly indicated. The results go far to show that the Anglo-Saxon field may not be so barren as many have thought.

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